

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 13009

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TGEN, TECH, EC

SUBJECT: URANIUM ENRICHMENT

REF: A) STATE 227510; B) STATE 228155; C) MANNIELLO-AEC/BRUSSELS

TELCON, NOV 20

SUMMARY: TOP-LEVEL EXECUTIVES OF ENEL (STATE ELECTRICITY AGENCY) AND CNEN (NUCLEAR ENERGY AGENCY) DURING MEETING WITH EMBASSY SCIATT AND SCICON PIRET EXPRESSED STRONG SUPPORT FOR EXPLORATORY DISCUSSIONS WITH US POTENTIAL AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN EUROPEAN URANIUM ENRICHMENT FACILITY. END SUMMARY.

DURING DISCUSSION IN WHICH US POSITION (REFS) WAS CAREFULLY CONVEYED, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ON ITALIAN VIEWS WAS PROVIDED:

1. IN PARIS, NOV 17 DISCUSSIONS OF AEC/WYARTS LETTER

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BY ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN ELECTRIC UTILITIES, ENEL POSITION

FOR EXPLORATORY DISCUSSIONS WAS POSITIVE WHILE GERMAN REPRESENTATIVES WERE CONCERNED BECAUSE OF THEIR INTEREST IN URENCO CENTRIFUGE PROJECT. FRENCH HAD STRONGLY OPPOSED US PARTICIPATION DURING EARLY EUROPEAN FOLLOW-UP OF PRESIDENT'S 1971 OPENING STATEMENT. HOWEVER, FRENCH REPS OF ELECTRICITE DE FRANCE AT NOV 17 MEETING STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF OPENING DISCUSSIONS. ENEL OFFICIAL WHO PARTICIPATED IN PARIS MEETING REITERATED STRONGLY THAT NEW, IMPORTANT ELEMENT IS ABOVE CHANGE IN FRENCH POSITION SINCE 1971. OTHER NEW ELEMENT, HE SAID, IS IMPENDING DECISIONS OF EUROPEANS TO BUILD THEIR OWN FACILITY AND ALSO HAVE RECOURSE TO SOVIET SERVICES.

2. AEC ENRICHMENT CONTRACT TERMS ARE WIDELY CONSIDERED BY EUROPEANS, ACCORDING TO ENEL OFFICIAL, AS UNREASONABLY COMMITTING EUROPE FOR TOO MANY YEARS TO US ENRICHMENT SERVICES, THUS FORCING THE CONSTRUCTION OF A EUROPEAN PLANT AND ALSO PURCHASE OF SOVIET ENRICHMENT SERVICES. SAID, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN A EUROPEAN PLANT WOULD HELP COUNTER OPTION ITALY PRESENTLY HOLDS TO BE ACTED UPON SOON, FOR DOUBLING PRESENT CONTRACT WITH SOVIETS FOR 3,000 TONS SWU.

3. ITALY, UNLIKE FRANCE, GERMANY OR NETHERLANDS, FOR EXAMPLE, DOES NOT HAVE A VESTED INTEREST IN ANY ONE PROCESS OR SOURCE OF ENRICHMENT, HENCE ITS ATTITUDE IS CONSIDERED IMPORTANT AND WILL BE WATCHED CAREFULLY BY THE OTHERS.

4. ITALIAN PLANS FOR FINANCIAL PARTICIPATION IN EURODIF APPARENTLY NOT FIXED. IT WAS MADE VERY CLEAR THAT ITALIAN DECISION HAD

NOT YET BEEN TAKEN ON EURODIF. IN REGARDS BREEDER NUCLEAR REACTOR TECHNOLOGY, NEGOTIATIONS WITH FRENCH FOR COOPERATION ON PHOENIX TYPE AND PEC TEST REACTOR WERE REPORTED AS NOW ADVANCING VERY FAVORABLY WITHOUT HAVING YET REACHED DECISION POINT. ITALIAN CNEN HAD BEGUN SMALL, ONE-UNIT CENTRIFUGE ENRICHMENT PROJECT SHOWN EMBASSY REPS, MAINTAINS A DIFFUSION BARRIER TEST PROGRAM AS WELL AS MOLTEN SODIUM BOILER AND HEAT TRANSFER (30 TON) TEST

PROGRAMS. PURPOSE SAID TO ACHIEVE IN-HOUSE CAPABILITIES AND KNOWLEDGE SUFFICIENT FOR EVALUATING POTENTIALS OF THESE TECHNIQUES IN EVENT OF LATER PURCHASE.

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5. ENEL POSITION RE EXPLORATORY TALKS WITH US, WHILE YET TO BE CLEARED WITH CNEN, AGIP-NUCLEARE, MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND OTHERS CONCERNED, IS EXPECTED, AS STATED ABOVE, TO BE POSITIVE. VOLPE

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